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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Thursday, September 1, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MAKING SWEET CIDER AT HOME." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Publication available, Farmers' Bulletin 1264-F, Farm Manufacture of Unfermented Apple Juice.

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Sweet cider is our theme today, homemakers. Doesn't that make your mouths water? The great American beverage, someone has called it. In the "good old days" before science was applied to practically everything around the farm and the farm home, apple picking time was sweet cider time. Some sweet cider was also made after apples had been stored for a while, especially around Thanksgiving, but after that one seldom saw sweet cider, because it didn't keep. First it became "hard", or fermented, and then it turned to vinegar. When we learned about pasteurizing fruit juices, it became possible to bottle sweet cider and have it any time during the winter.

Now the Bureau of Plant Industry of the U. S. Department of Agriculture says we used to make too much work of bottling cider, trying to get rid of cloudiness in the juice as well as to pasteurize it. Scientists have developed an easy, simple way of filtering the juice through a substance called "diatomaceous earth" before it is pasteurized. This makes it possible to carry the task straight through with one handling instead of by the rather cumbersome method that was formerly recommended.

Our Washington correspondent says those who are interested can get free copies of the recently revised Farmers' Bulletin 1264-F, "Farm Manufacture of Unfermented Apple Juice," by Joseph S. Caldwell of the Bureau of Plant Industry. In a moment I'll give you some of the high points in the new and easy method of making cider as described in this bulletin.

Before I do so I want to say that if you have been hearing rumors of a small apple crop this year, that needn't deter you from making cider out of the windfalls and cull apples from the home apple trees. In fact, since early freezes, disease, and insect infestation are the causes of the smaller commercial apple crop, these same troubles affecting home apple trees may mean that more of the culls and defective apples may be made into cider. So if you have a few apple trees, it would be a good idea to send early for a copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1264-F, before the free supply is exhausted.

Here are the steps in the new process as outlined by Dr. Caldwell:

The juice is pressed, allowed to stand for 12 hours or overnight to settle, decanted from the sediment, and blended if necessary. It is then raised to a temperature of 130° to 140° Fahrenheit, and mixed with diatomaceous earth. This is also called kieselguhr, diatomite, and improperly, infusorial earth. For a 10-gallon batch of cider three-fourths of a pound to a pound of the earth are used. The juice and diatomaceous earth are thoroughly stirred and immediately filtered, sealed in final containers, and pasteurized.

If only small quantities of juice are being handled, as in the case of cider making from a few trees in the home garden, a bag filter is used. Dr. Caldwell says:

"Prepare the filter by making a cone-shaped bag of closely woven cloth, such as denim or flannel. Suspend it by the open top from a support and then coat it with a thin layer of diatomaceous earth by stirring half a pound of the earth into sufficient water to fill the bag, and pour it through. When the water has drained through, fill the bag with cider, previously mixed with the earth.

"The first juice coming through may not be perfectly clear. If not, return it to the filter. The juice will become clear when a perfect coating of earth has been formed on the cloth.

"It is best to keep the filter filled up completely when in use. This prevents drying and cracking of the earth film.

"The clear juice is placed in the final containers as it comes from the filter, sealed, and pasteurized at 170 degrees Fahrenheit from 25 to 35 minutes according to the size of the bottles.

"Diatomaceous earth is sold under various names and in various grades of fineness. Those known as 150 and 200 mesh were found by Bureau scientists to be the most satisfactory for cider making. Many companies offering diatomaceous earth for sale indicate the grades intended particularly for filtering fruit juices. These have been specially treated to remove organic and inorganic impurities that might affect the quality and flavor of juices filtered through them. Only earths so treated should be used.

"If a suitable supply of diatomaceous earth cannot be obtained the thick cloth bag filter described should be used to strain the juice. Heating the juice before filtering, and passing it through the filter while hot speeds up the filtration and shortens the time required for pasteurization. You can preheat the juice to 140 degrees Fahrenheit without affecting its flavor, but if you let it get any hotter, the juice- that is, the cider,- will have a slightly cooked flavor, and nothing is gained by using higher temperatures in preheating the juice. Pasteurizing is done at 170 degrees Fahrenheit after the juice is sealed in the containers.

"It is very important," Dr. Caldwell says, "that the containers be thoroughly cooled as quickly as possible after pasteurization. They must never be stored until they have cooled to room temperature."

After you've stored the juice- or cider, as I prefer to call it,- for 10 days, look the containers over to see that there is no leakage or other defect. Then you can label it and put it away in crates or wherever you plan to store it. If you intend to offer any of it for sale, our Washington correspondent advises that you send to the Food and Drug Administration for a copy of the label regulations for sweet cider, and also acquaint yourself with the State food requirements of a similar kind.

Well, homemakers, this talk has certainly made me thirsty! How about a nice well-chilled glass of sweet cider right now? And don't forget the number of the apple-juice bulletin,- it's 1264-F.

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